

## Digest?

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# The Call

## Digest

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United Methodist Church  
have to close?

January 16, 2013

[www.holston.org](http://www.holston.org)

## Church staff shocked by \$290,000 miracle offering

**W**hen the leaders of Christ United Methodist Church dedicated their Christmas Eve offering to building an orphanage in South Sudan, they set the goal at \$85,000.

The amount seemed high, says Becky Hall, but the congregation is familiar with the Holston Conference ministry led by their former Chattanooga District superintendent, the Rev. Fred Dearing and his wife, Libby.

"People know the need, want to help, and know that the Dearings will oversee the project," said Hall, Christ UMC director of ministries.

On Dec. 24, more than 3,300 people attended Christ UMC's five Christmas eve services in Chattanooga, Tenn. When the offering was counted, church leaders were stunned.

"I hope you will sit down before you read this email," Dearing wrote to ministry supporters after he heard the news. "God never ceases to amaze me."

The initial offering was counted at a mind-boggling \$222,100. Since Christmas, members have given a total \$290,000 to help the helpless children of South Sudan.

"I can't stress enough how surprised we all were and are," said the Rev. Mark Flynn, senior pastor. "I am extremely proud to be connected to such generous people."

On top of that, the children of the church collected \$11,000 to dig a well for the orphanage, Flynn said.

"We now have all the money we need to get started, furnish the orphanage, and a year's operating budget," said Libby



A worker prepares the land for a fence around the future Holston Conference orphanage in South Sudan.

Dearing, who has advocated for an orphanage since encountering numerous homeless children on her 2008 mission trips to South Sudan.

The new home, located in Pukuka, will include four houses to accommodate six children and a house mother, Libby Dearing said. She asked for prayers from church members in Holston.

"I am so excited about getting started," she said. "Please be in prayer for God to provide us with a Christian director and staff so that the children are loved, nurtured, and feel a sense of family -- both here on earth and with their heavenly father." ■

## Resurrection youth goal: Bring \$10, save 12,000 lives

**H**olston leaders hope to save 12,000 lives in Africa by asking 12,000 participants at Resurrection to each give at least \$10 to fight a deadly disease.

Resurrection, the annual winter youth event sponsored by Holston Conference, will be held Jan. 18-20 and Jan. 25-27 at Gatlinburg Convention Center. The speaker will be the Rev. Lisa Yebuah, pastor of inviting ministries at Edenton United Methodist Church, Raleigh, N.C. Music will be provided by The City Harmonic.

Months before the winter gathering, the Conference Council on Youth Ministries (CCYM) voted to dedicate the offering to Imagine No Malaria, said Laura Lambert, Holston associate

director of connectional ministries. The goal is to raise at least \$120,000 to help Holston Conference meet its \$1 million dollar goal (100,000 lives saved) by June 2013.

Imagine No Malaria is a United Methodist initiative to raise \$75 million to eliminate malaria deaths in Africa by 2015. Resurrection is expected to provide the largest single contribution to Holston's campaign, according to LeRae Collins, Holston's Imagine No Malaria coordinator.

In addition, the offerings for Rez Kidz on Jan. 20-21 and Divine Rhythm on Feb. 1-3, both in Gatlinburg, will be designated for Imagine No Malaria. Offerings for the two events could raise an additional \$10,000, Collins said. ■

# Commentary: Why did West View UMC close?

By Bruce Spangler

**D**isbanding. Leave-taking. These are rather odd ecclesiastical words. The oddness is not in their peculiarity or strangeness. The words have meanings and definitions that are quite obvious.

*Disbanding* is the act of ceasing to function as an organization, and to separate and move in different directions; disperse. *Leave-taking* is a farewell that “Webster’s Dictionary” suggests is done so “politely.”

The oddness in these two verbs lies in the frequency or more so, the lack of frequency of their use. However, the people called West View United Methodist Church became all too familiar



West View United Methodist Church, in Knoxville, closed on Dec. 30, 2012.

with the terms. Voting to disband on Dec. 16, the people took leave of their building on Sunday, Dec. 30, 2012.

West View did not close because of a lack of faithfulness. For nearly 82 years, West View was a faithful Wesleyan and Methodist presence in Knoxville, Tenn. It maintained its orders of Word

and Table. It reached out to its community. It did so in the name of the risen Christ. No, a lack of faithfulness is not the reason.

So why did West View close? Our Jewish ancestors and heritage helped me identify and understand the phenomena that we were experiencing.

We are quite familiar with the text where Jesus mouths the words, “Where there are two or three gathered, there I am also.” I believe that and affirm it as part of my experience. Yet the experience speaks to “fellowship” and companionship. I don’t think it speaks to the experience of “community.”

According to JewishEncyclopedia.com, there are a certain number of adults required, or a quorum, necessary for most acts of public worship and prayer. The word for the quorum of at least 10 adults is “minyan.” This source continues to cite:

*The minimum of 10 is evidently a survival in the Synagogue from the much older institution in which ten heads of families made up the smallest political subdivision. In Exodus 28, Moses, on the advice of Jethro, appoints chiefs of tens, as well as chiefs of fifties, of hundreds, and of thousands. In like manner there were the decurio among the Romans and the tithingman among the early English.*

I began to suspect that the energy required to sustain a community is different from sustaining and maintaining fellowship. The practice of minyan exemplifies such an understanding.

Community requires a more exhaustive and collective spirit to meet both demands and expectations therein. Maybe that is what our Jewish ancestors recognized from its experience and practice. The task of any and all sacred communities is no easy mission. As United Methodists believe, the church exists, under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world. (See paragraph 201 of the *Book of Discipline*.) These tasks – this mission, as led by the Spirit of God -- requires more than two or three people to sustain and maintain.

I am ever so proud of my brothers and sisters of West View for their wisdom in discerning that they were lacking the collective energy to meet the task of being the church that maintains, edifies and serves as a redemptive agent.

Furthermore, I applaud their maturity in seeing that in order for them to be faithful witnesses of the risen Christ, they, individually, need to find a worshipping community that has the collective energy to meet the expectations of any local entity of the body of Christ. ■

The Rev. Spangler is the former pastor at West View UMC and current chief operating officer for Volunteer Ministry Center in Knoxville, Tenn.

## HOLSTON BRIEFS

**Winter retreat for adults ages 18-35:** Divine Rhythm happens Feb. 1-3 at Mills Auditorium in Gatlinburg, Tenn., with the Rev. Olu Brown as preacher and the Casey Darnell Band leading worship. Find out more at [DivineRhythm.com](http://DivineRhythm.com) or call the Holston Connectional Ministries office at (865) 690-4080.

**Training for children’s ministry workers:** LEAD Kids will be held March 8-9 at Camp Lookout in Rising Fawn, Ga. For more information, call Rev. Gaye King at (865) 690-4080.

**In memoriam:** Rev. Clark Jenkins, age 59, died Jan. 4 in Columbia, S.C. Rev. Charles Smythers, age 78, died Dec. 24 in Austinville, Va. ■

**The Call** is the news source for Holston Conference. ● The Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church includes 897 churches in east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia. ● Our resident bishop is Mary Virginia Taylor. ● Our executive assistant is the Rev. Carol Wilson. ● Our office address is P.O. Box 850, 217 South Rankin Road, Alcoa, TN 37701. ● (865) 690-4080 ● [www.Holston.org](http://www.Holston.org) ● [thecall@holston.org](mailto:thecall@holston.org) or [info@holston.org](mailto:info@holston.org) ● [Facebook.Holston.org](http://Facebook.Holston.org) ● [@TheCall\\_Holston](https://twitter.com/TheCall_Holston) ● Free e-news: [thecalltwo.holston.org](http://thecalltwo.holston.org)